



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

November 1, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We are writing with regards to the reported Letter of Request (LOR) to the United States by the Republic of Turkey in association with its attempt to buy 40 F-16 fighter jets and dozens of modernization kits for its existing warplanes.

As you know, in 2017 Congress adopted and the President signed into law the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). While CAATSA was progressing, and despite the intent of Congress being abundantly clear, Turkey announced that it would purchase the S-400 surface-to-air missile defense system from Russia. Despite nearly three years of attempts to find a solution that would prevent Turkey from being in violation of CAATSA, Ankara persisted with its acquisition and activation of the Russian S-400s and CAATSA sanctions were imposed on Turkey.

In October it was reported that Turkey requested to purchase “40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16 fighter jets and nearly 80 modernization kits for its existing warplanes.”<sup>1</sup> On October 17, Turkish President Erdogan told reporters that the United States “has proposed the sale of a batch of F-16 fighter jets”<sup>2</sup> but the reported sale has yet to be confirmed.

We have noted that your Department has declined to answer questions about the LOR, citing policy of not commenting before Congress has been notified of the LOR. We believe that the widespread reporting on Turkey’s request, as well as President Erdogan’s own statements, provide us sufficient basis to declare our opposition to this potential sale.

There are many reasons for our opposition:

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<sup>1</sup> “Turkey's Erdogan Says U.S. Proposed F-16 Sales in Return for Its F-35 Investment.” *Reuters*, 17 Oct. 2021. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-erdogan-says-us-proposed-f-16-sales-return-its-f-35-investment-2021-10-17/>).

<sup>2</sup> Bekdil, Burak. “Turkey: US proposed to sell it F-16 fighters.” *DefenseNews*, 17 Oct. 2021. (<https://www.defensenews.com/air/2021/10/17/turkey-us-proposed-to-sell-it-f-16-fighters/>).

1. Less than one year since the imposition of these CAATSA sanctions, the Erdogan government has made it clear that it has no intention of coming into compliance with U.S. law or dealing with the underlying conditions that led to Turkey's ejection from the F-35 program and Congressional holds on purchases of American weapons by Turkey. Indeed, in September, President Erdogan declared his intention of purchasing additional S-400s.<sup>3</sup>
2. During his confirmation hearing, President Biden's nominee for Ambassador to Turkey, former Senator Jeff Flake, declared that Turkey should face additional CAATSA sanctions should it acquire additional Russian weapon systems and we agree. Since this appears to be the position of both the Administration and Congress, even considering Turkey's LOR under the present circumstances sends the wrong signal to Turkey and gives it reason to doubt our resolve while continuing to develop its military relationship with Russia.
3. One of the reasons Congress insisted on Turkey's ejection from the F-35 program was because of the significant risks associated with collocating S-400s and F-35s. Experts have noted that providing Turkey the Block 70 modernization kits poses similar collocation risks if Ankara continues to possess Russian S-400s. Since upgraded F-16s still play such a significant role for us and our reliable allies, that is a risk that we do not find acceptable.
4. Finally, given the CAATSA sanctions already imposed, we anticipate that such a sale could only be finalized via invoking technicalities – for example, by trying to sell the jets to an entity other than Turkey's SSB, which has been sanctioned. Such an approach would have to be viewed as an inappropriate circumvention of the intent of Congress and would force us to consider additional legislation to restrict a potential purchase.

We share your goal of a Turkey that is rooted to the West, but we will not achieve that goal if the Erdogan government escapes accountability for violating U.S. law and the standards of the NATO alliance.

We request a formal notification of any Turkish LOR, the specifics of such an LOR, the Administration's position on such an LOR, and responses to our specific objections. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to your response.

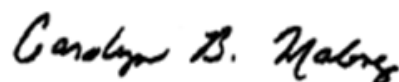
Sincerely,



Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

Chuck Fleischmann  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> Pamuk, Humeyra. "Erdogan says Turkey plans to buy more Russian defense systems." *Reuters*, 27 Sept. 2021. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-erdogan-says-intends-buy-another-russian-s-400-defence-system-cbs-news-2021-09-26/>).

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Brad Sherman  
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Brian Fitzpatrick  
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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
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